



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

As you know, the success of our industry is due in part to our welcoming of international visitors. Currently, there are obstacles to the U.S. entry process that can be discouraging. However, with the expansion of security programs, such as the [Visa Waiver Program](#) (VWP), we have the potential to improve the U.S. entry process and provide international travelers with greater flexibility.

As one of several proposed security enhancements to enable the VWP to survive and expand, the new [Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#) (ESTA) program will be implemented **January 12, 2009**. ESTA allows for more confidence in the VWP by pre-screening individual travelers before they board flights bound for the United States.

These programs are vital to maintaining a thriving international inbound market and the expansion of these programs will strengthen our domestic security, boost our diplomacy efforts and stimulate economic growth.

For more information, please read the *Industry News* section below about the ESTA Program.

Have a great week.

Margie R. Ennen

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Call for all Calendar of Event Items

The Arizona Office of Tourism is requesting 2009 event information to be considered for the Calendar of Events posted on www.ArizonaGuide.com. These items encourage tourists to experience special occasions held throughout Arizona. For events to be considered, they must be open to the public and of interest to tourists.

Submissions should include the date and year; community in which the event takes place; name of event; venue; venue address; description of event; admission, event time; phone number and/or Web site for the public to obtain additional information.

Please include your contact information along with your submission so that we may reach you with any questions we may have prior to posting your event. Photography to accompany listings may be included, and we can supply you with an image information form. If you have questions or would like an event submission form, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at Mmagnusson@azot.gov or 602-364-3695.

Don't Forget to Place Your Travel Deals Online

AOT's consumer Web site, www.ArizonaGuide.com, offers visitors a Travel Deals web page for a listing of special deals and packages. Visitors can find special offers for Bowl Games, Holiday travel and Romantic deals.

If you are a supplier, you may directly post tourism related specials, discounts or packages by visiting www.azot.gov and clicking on Travel Deals. There is no charge to list a package on the Travel Deals section. If you have questions or need additional assistance, contact Marjorie Magnusson at mmagnusson@azot.gov or 602-364-3695.

AOT's Research Section has been Updated

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Lodging Performance October 2008](#)
- [Lodging Performance October 2008 \(By County\)](#)
- [Gross Sales and Taxes September 2008](#)
- [Airport Passenger Volume September 2008](#)
- [Airport Passenger Volume October 2008](#)
- [National Park Visitation September 2008](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Beth Billings, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3689 or via e-mail at bbillings@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

AOT to Conduct Sales Mission in Mexico

Mexico is one of Arizona's most important international markets. To further increase awareness of the Grand Canyon State, the Arizona Office of Tourism will coordinate a sales mission to Mexico in February 2009 and we would like to invite you to participate.

Each year, AOT coordinates a sales mission to reach out to the second tier cities in Mexico – cities that are not typically reached through our other promotions. This year we will target Puebla, Queretaro and Leon during a five-day mission scheduled for the week of February 23 – 27, 2009. We will host breakfast seminars in each city and invite local travel agents and tour operators to attend. Additionally we will coordinate small media luncheons with two – four journalists in each city.

For additional information and to obtain a participation form, please contact Loretta Belonio at lbeldonio@azot.gov or 602-364-3725.

Arizona Enjoys Statewide Exposure in London Show

Arizona was very well represented recently during World Travel Market in London. World Travel Market is the premier global event for the travel industry and the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. The event, held November 10-13, showcased vacation destinations from around the world and attracted travel professionals and media from all over the UK and Europe. In addition to the AOT staff, the Arizona delegation consisted of the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Scottsdale CVB, Tucson CVB, Flagstaff CVB, Maverick Aviation Group, Ranches of Southern Arizona, Hospitality Suite Resort, Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa, and Best Western Grand Canyon Squire Inn. During the four-day event, appointments were held with nearly 50 tour operators and travel journalists to review their current destinations and to look at ways to expand their Arizona product information.

For additional information or a copy of the World Travel Market Lead report contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbeldonio@azot.gov.

Industry News

ESTA Implementation Deadline Approaches, Tool Kit Available Online

On January 12, 2009, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) will be mandatory for all visitors from Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries traveling to or through the United State via sea or air. ESTA gathers biographic information from nationals of the 34 VWP countries traveling to the U.S. in advance of their visit. To help spread the word about ESTA, review the information below and share it with as many others as possible:

- [ESTA Overview](#)
- [Talking Points](#) to help you and your representatives explain the program
- [Q & A](#) to provide greater detail on the program and its importance
- [PowerPoint](#) showing the ESTA experience for users
- Travelers should visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> to complete the application.

TIA Merger, Name Change Approved

The board of directors of the Travel Industry Association approved the merger Friday with the Travel Business Roundtable. The U.S. Travel Association will be the new name of the group effective Jan. 1. TIA President and CEO Roger Dow will serve in the same capacity in the newly

formed group. "We are proud to combine the forces of TIA and TBR to build one of Washington's most effective advocacy organizations," said Jonathan M. Tisch, chairman of the Travel Business Roundtable and chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels. Tisch has served as TBR chairman since 1966. TIA will hold a conference call on Thursday for members to present its agenda for 2009 and outline what the organization is doing to address the current economic situation in the country. The call will be held at 2 p.m. EST. Details at 202-408-2172. (*Special to TA*)

IATA Expects \$2.5 Billion Loss for Airline Industry in 2009

The global airline industry can expect a bleak 2009, with sector-wide losses of about \$2.5 billion despite deep cost cuts by U.S. carriers last year, the International Air Transport Association said today. IATA chief executive Giovanni Bisignani told reporters in Geneva that next year would be the worst revenue environment in 50 years, but that U.S. carriers--many of which have already slashed capacity and cut staff as high oil prices sapped revenue during 2008--could still turn a modest profit next year. "North America will be the only region in the black, but the expected \$300 million profit is less than 1 percent of their revenue," Bisignani said. "2009 will be another tough year for everyone." IATA forecasts that passenger traffic will drop 3 percent in 2009, the first decline since 2001 when the terrorist attacks on the U.S. abruptly slowed global air traffic by 2.7 percent. (AP; www.ChicagoTribune.com/Business)

Airlines Bracing for Descent in Overseas Travel

Overseas travel is looking like another casualty of the hard economic times, says The Washington Post. The Travel Industry Association expects 25.5 million overseas travelers to visit the U.S. next year, a 3 percent decline from this year. The number of visitors coming into the country had grown in the past two years mainly because of the weakened dollar. But that traffic could dry up as the dollar strengthens and recession takes hold in economies around the world, TIA says. Troubles from a prolonged downturn could ripple through the U.S. economy as travel-shy globe-trotters shun hotels, rental cars, cruise ships, even restaurants, says the Post. Struggling airlines could also further reduce capacity--cutting flights, grounding planes--which could put more pressure on jobs. Large U.S. airlines have been expanding internationally--pinning their hopes on deep-pocketed business travelers. The International Air Transport Association says international air travel is still growing, but at a slower rate. (*Page D1, Washington Post*)

Southwest Air Approved For LaGuardia Slots

Southwest Airlines Co., the largest low-fare carrier, won court approval to pay \$7.5 million for assets held by bankrupt U.S. carrier ATA Airlines Inc. that include 14 flight slots at New York's LaGuardia airport. The approval by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Basil Lorch in Indianapolis, where ATA is based, will allow Southwest to start flights at the nation's most-congested airport, a break with its practice of avoiding crowded facilities. The purchase, says Bloomberg, which doesn't include aircraft or ATA employees, allows Dallas-based Southwest to enter a city where full-fare carriers such as Delta Air Lines Inc. dwarf lower-priced competitors. The sale won't be executed until a formal Chapter 11 plan for ATA is approved by the court. "It's a very important market for customers," Southwest Chief Executive Officer Gary Kelly said today at a Credit Suisse Group AG airline conference in New York. "It will be very successful from the get-go." (*Marketing and Tourism Trends Newsletter, 12-15-08*)

PFK Revised Hotel Forecast is Scarier

PFK Hospitality Research revised its revenue forecast for U.S. hotels in 2009, and, not surprisingly, it's a lot worse than originally predicted, says Travel Weekly. PFK forecasts a 7.8 percent decrease in revenue per available room next year. In September, the research firm

projected a 3.2 percent drop in RevPAR. The updated forecast was based on Smith Travel Research lodging data through September 2008 and the November release of Moody's U.S. economic forecast, PKF said. PKF is forecasting 2.5 percent fewer occupied rooms in 2009. A 2.5 percent falloff in demand, combined with a 12.9 percent increase in supply, will result in a 2009 occupancy level of 57.6 percent. In September, PKF forecast 58.7 percent occupancy for 2009.

Most U.S. hotels will suffer, but leisure-oriented hotels in warm-weather destinations are particularly vulnerable, PKF said. Five of the seven largest RevPAR declines will be in Florida, including Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Tampa.
(www.TravelWeekly.com, 12/9)

TIA Launches Web Site on Travel Issues

In the latest phase of its effort to inform the incoming Obama administration on important travel policies and the role that travel plays in strengthening the U.S. economy, the Travel Industry Association Tuesday launched the first Web-based resource on critical travel issues for the new administration. TIA's Internet portal <http://poweroftravel.org/transition/> is designed to provide transition teams at the departments of Commerce, Homeland Security, Interior, State, Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency with in-depth briefing papers on all key travel issues prepared by government agencies, think tanks and other third parties. Details at 202-408-2172. (*Special to TA*)

The Current State of Travel

Travel + Leisure commissioned Beta Research to conduct a Travel Trend Study to uncover tendencies and trends in the travel behavior of today's consumers. Between Oct. 14 and Nov. 3, magazine readers and a sample of U.S. travelers, who are non- T+L readers, were surveyed by e-mail, with nearly 2,000 questionnaires completed. Among the findings: 96 percent of T+L readers are planning a U.S. trip in the coming year, and 77 percent plan their trips less than three months in advance. The top planned domestic destinations for the coming year include Florida, California, New York, Arizona and Nevada. (*Special to TA*)

New Exhibit in Grand Canyon's Geology Museum at Yavapai Point Wins Prestigious NAI Award

Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Steve Martin announced last week that the exhibits in the Geology Museum at Yavapai Point were awarded top honors in the interior exhibit category of the National Association for Interpretation's (NAI's) Interpretive Media Awards Competition.

Each year, public and private organizations engaged in resource interpretation submit recently completed publications, books, movies, pamphlets, and exhibits for review and competition in NAI's various media award categories. This year's winners included submissions from private individuals and companies, county and state agencies, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and from as far away as Canada and Australia. So, when the exhibition designed for the Geology Museum at Yavapai Point won first place in the interior exhibit category, "it was a tremendous honor," said Superintendent Martin.

The new exhibits, officially opened to the public in May 2007, were designed to provide one location in the park where visitors could gain a comprehensive understanding of Grand Canyon's geologic history. The exhibition's design team also wanted the exhibits to fit in with the building's original design and purpose.

For more information about these new exhibits or the park's NAI Media Award, please call the park's Branch Chief for Interpretive Media and Design, Ellen Seeley, at 928-638-7836. For general information on the Yavapai Observation Station or how to get there, or to see pictures of some of the new exhibits, please visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/visitorcenters.htm, and click on the appropriate links.